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Author of Rolling Stone article on alleged U-Va. rape didn't talk to accused perpetrators**By Paul Farhi** December 1, 2014

The writer of a blockbuster Rolling Stone magazine story about an alleged gang rape at a University of Virginia fraternity has said that she was unable to contact or interview the men who supposedly perpetrated the crime.

In interviews with The Washington Post and Slate.com last week, writer Sabrina Rubin Erdely declined to answer repeated questions about the men's response to an allegation by a female student named Jackie that they had sexually assaulted her at a U-Va. fraternity party in 2012.

However, in a podcast interview with Slate, Erdely indicated that she was unable to locate the fraternity brothers in the course of her reporting to get their side of the story.

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"I reached out to [the accused] in multiple ways," Erdely said in the Slate interview. "They were kind of hard to get in touch with because [the fraternity's] contact page was pretty outdated. But I wound up speaking . . . I wound up getting in touch with their local president, who sent me an e-mail, and then I talked with their sort of, their national guy, who's kind of their national crisis manager. They were both helpful in their own way, I guess."

Sean Woods, who edited the Rolling Stone story, said in an interview that Erdely did not talk to the alleged

assailants. "We did not talk to them. We could not reach them," he said in an interview.

However, he said, "we verified their existence," in part by talking to Jackie's friends. "I'm satisfied that these guys exist and are real. We knew who they were."

News organizations typically seek comment from those accused of criminal acts or from their attorneys as a matter of fairness and balance, as well as to confirm that the individuals exist.

Erdely's Nov. 19 article, which touched off a criminal investigation and an outraged reaction among the school's students, faculty and alumni, included no such response and gave no indication that she had met or seen the men, who Jackie said were still on campus.

The nine men who Jackie said participated in the gang rape were not identified by name in the Rolling Stone story. But the article contained clues to their identities, including their affiliation with the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity at U-Va. and their attendance at a party at the frat in September 2012. "Drew," the frat brother who allegedly lured Jackie to the darkened room at the fraternity in which the assault took place, was described in the most detail in the article. Erdely said that he was an attractive U-Va. junior and a lifeguard at a university pool.

No one has been arrested for the alleged crime. The university has turned the matter over to the Charlottesville police, who have launched an investigation.

Erdely declined to address specific questions about her reporting when contacted on Sunday and Monday.

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"I could address many of [the questions] individually . . . but by dwelling on this, you're getting sidetracked," she wrote in an e-mail response to The Post's inquiry. "As I've already told you, the gang-rape scene that leads the story is the alarming account that Jackie — a person whom I found to be credible — told to me, told her friends, and importantly, what she told the UVA administration, which chose not to act on her allegations in any way — i.e., the overarching point of the article. THAT is the story: the culture that greeted her and so many other UVA

women I interviewed, who came forward with allegations, only to be met with indifference.”

She added, “I think I did my due diligence in reporting this story; RS’s excellent editors, fact-checkers, and lawyers all agreed.”

Woods said that the men were not named in the story because “we were telling Jackie’s story. It’s her story.”

In her article, Erdely quoted the fraternity’s chapter president and a spokesman for Phi Kappa Psi’s national chapter. Both expressed shock at the allegations when informed of them by university administrators but said that they had no direct knowledge of them and were seeking to substantiate them.

There have been no arrests in the case, and no alleged assailants have been publicly identified.

In her interview with The Post, Erdely said that she “corroborated every aspect of the story that I could.” She said that she did not identify any of the alleged attackers in the article “by Jackie’s request. She asked me not to name the individuals because she’s so fearful of them. That was something we agreed on. She was nervous about naming the frat, too. I told her, ‘If we’re trying to shine a light on this, we have to name the fraternity.’”

Erdely declined to say whether she knows the names of the alleged perpetrators, including “Drew.”

“I can’t answer that,” she said. “This was a topic that made Jackie extremely uncomfortable.”

Paul Farhi is The Washington Post's media reporter.
